



News Bulletin 8.

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THE NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION.

1512 H Street, N. W.,

Washington, D. C.

Condensed Report of the Executive Secretary to the Board of Trustees,
Annual Meeting, May 20, 1920.

Financial. The National Parks Association was organized May 29, 1919; the By-Laws established the third Thursday of May for its regular Annual Meeting.

All Associations which are not liberally endowed in advance pass through early periods of financial stress, and the National Parks Association is no exception to the rule. It began, as the common phrase goes, "on a shoe string", with little more than \$5,000 subscribed, and with a wide enthusiasm for its objectives but no public appreciation of the substantial fact that their accomplishment required financial support. The country had just passed through a war necessitating extreme personal sacrifices, during which 1,800 associations of various kinds passed out of existence through failure of financial support; it was still in a period of excessive taxation; and it had begun an unprecedented period of peace-time "drives" for new and old causes, charitable, patriotic, educational, economic and religious, which demanded an aggregate of unheard-of millions of dollars.

No poorer time to begin such an Association as ours could have been chosen. But the circumstances were such that it must begin then or never, and our financial needs were so small compared with others that we determined to chance it.

At the start our experienced President expressed the belief that, if the Association survived its first year, it would live prosperously for many years. The coming struggle suggested by these words, and the prophesy of a fine career conditioned upon the success of that struggle, have proved the soundness of his vision. The Association has survived its first year after a hard fight for existence, and its future appears to be assured.

It is unnecessary to detail here the story of this struggle. Last summer's overwhelming crowd of visitors in our national parks made it impossible for the concessioners to fulfil their promises to secure a large membership for us there, and in the autumn we were compelled to seek support immediately from men and women of wealth who were naturally

sympathetic with the purposes of the Association. Our difficulty was to discover these individuals among the many devoted to other causes, and in fact we did not discover them until, in most instances, they had already yielded so fully to the pressure of innumerable other causes that they had little left for us.

The winter's financial work, however, was most useful. While it slenderly supported the Association, it enabled us to present our purposes and needs to a large number of persons who will respond generously in the future; it won us the good will and assistance of many strong sister associations who gave us experienced guidance; it defined our future field of operations and determined successful methods; and, importantly, it proved to us that our cause stands high in the esteem of a large class of big-visioned men and women of affairs and wealth who hereafter, under improved conditions, may be depended upon to see this Association safely into a condition of self support.

Applying this experience and estimating from our actual practice that we might, at the worst, need maximum help of \$15,000 a year for three years to see us self-supporting, meantime permitting us to apply our whole energy to our legitimate work, we decided, early in April, to form a group of fifteen men who would agree to contribute \$1,000 each for three years. This was our President's original plan, now for the first time become practically accomplishable.

We began the formation of this underwriting group a month ago and so far we have secured its first six members.

This is a propitious start. The beginning of such a group is always its most difficult part. No one wants to lead it; the first question is often, "Who have you got?"

A good deal of work remains to be done to complete this group, but, with one-third done, and these men of the highest personal, as well as business reputation, men of broad vision and national horizons, we are justified in our confidence. Besides, we know pretty well who the next several will be, and in addition we have greatly interested several others who have reserved decision, one or more of whom we believe will come in.

In addition to this thousand dollar group, our lists of twenty-five dollar and hundred dollar members are growing healthily and two men have sent us \$250 each without solicitation. One life member at \$500 joined without solicitation after the issue of our Bulletin No. 6.

On the whole, I believe that the Association has passed its greatest financial crisis and that a long life of usefulness lies ahead.

Membership. When we began a year ago we had about a hundred members.

In the beginning we assumed that, in a country containing a couple of million people who had visited our national parks and many other millions intensely interested in them, members would flock to our standard of their own accord. This proved to be entirely unwarranted. We soon discovered that, at three dollars a year, we were obliged to solicit practically every member we secured. There are at best only two or three out of every hundred really interested people who will be willing to join--and to find these it is necessary to ask the entire hundred. Our case must also be properly presented. It was several months before experiment developed the successful circular.

In a word we use the time-honored method of circularizing lists of possible members. We test the first thousand of each list, and from the keyed results accept or reject the list. In practice the system works out almost mathematically. But membership thus acquired costs us nearly our first year's dues to collect. Last year's membership will only now begin to add to our available income. This experience is identical with that of other associations, some of which pay more for their new membership than we do.

With little capital available for membership enterprise, we have not been able to do a great deal; nevertheless our sister associations tell us that we have grown remarkably fast for a first year. Better yet, it is a sound membership. Members write to us frequently asking to have work assigned to them. A surprising proportion of new members are business men, writing under the letter heads of their own businesses. Many volunteer valuable suggestions. We have a great opportunity before us.

Our new financial plan provides for a generous capital for membership enterprise, and we may look forward confidently to a rapid growth. The East and Middle West are responding to the call in greater proportion and with more enthusiasm even than the West, where most of our national parks lie--which is something to think about.

We shall use other methods of securing membership in addition to circularizing. The Denver Tourist Bureau conducted a brief successful membership campaign for us at its own initiative and expense last winter, and Chambers of Commerce in other national parks states will follow Denver's example in the fall. During the coming summer we shall lecture several times a week in the Yellowstone and collect memberships at the close of the lecture. If this proves the successful way of handling the membership opportunity offered by the national parks, we shall use it on a big scale the season following. We can not undertake the expense and the risk of doing so this year; we must test the plan in actual practice first.

Magazine. It has been established by several very successful organizations that a popular illustrated periodical is the surest means to increase membership rapidly. The very nature of our Association suggests a magazine. It is universally, I may say, expected of us. I hear of it by mail and in

conversation continually. The opportunity of course is self-evident. In addition to increasing our membership, a magazine will become a most effective engine for the accomplishment of our purposes.

Under any conditions a magazine is a very serious financial undertaking, but especially so in a period of paper scarcity and inflated costs. We have long planned a simple news sheet, handsomely illustrated, which should cost comparatively little, and which may grow, naturally and soundly with the years, into the greater thing. A few weeks ago a helpful and able member of the Association, Harold F. White of Chicago, made a suggestion which may lead to important developments.

Mr. White's idea was to interest some strong advertising house in the business side of a national parks magazine in the hope that, in view of future profits, it might finance the beginnings. Later on he found a house which considered the suggestion seriously, and a tentative plan is now in preparation which will not involve the Association in financial risk. A two year's contract has been suggested covering an experimental period and looking to the formation then of a company in which the Association shall have, without cost to itself, a just financial equity, a voice in the business management and the entire control of the editorial content and policy.

The proposition has not yet passed the investigation stages, and of course it may fail of realization, in which case we should promptly begin the issue of our news sheet at as frequent intervals as our growing resources permit. This should carry our message in picture as well as text.

Publications. The Association has issued two handsomely illustrated reports, one on the Grand Canyon and one on the new Zion National Park, which have attracted wide attention because of the large proportion of information they contain which is publicly available nowhere else, and because of their educational value. The Boards of Education of several cities have the Zion booklet under consideration for supplementary reading, and several experienced educators predict for it a considerable school use.

Several other publications of unique popular character are planned. One on "Wild Animals One May See in Our National Parks", by E. W. Nelson, Chief of the Biological Survey, is likely to have an extremely wide circulation. A popular pamphlet on the "Birth of the Rockies", by Dr. Willis T. Lee of the Geological Survey, one on Glacier National Park similar in purpose and method to the Zion report, and one on that wonder of the desert, Rainbow Bridge, are in preparation.

These publications are expensive, and we purpose to place upon each a reasonable price; but of course every member will receive one copy free. The hotel franchise holder in one of our national parks has agreed to purchase an edition of a booklet similar to the one on Zion at a price which will pay for our plates and show a profit besides. This will greatly lessen the cost of our members' copies and provide plates for future use. A similar

arrangement is pending with a railroad company concerning a pamphlet already issued, and it seems probable that an important proportion of our illustrated publications can be handled in this way.

News Bulletins. Our news bulletins, seven in number, have done much toward establishing the undoubted public standing which the Association has acquired during the year. Its bulletin on the plight of the elk aroused nation-wide attention. Later the Association, together with the American Game Protective Association, the Camp Fire Club of America and the American Bison Society, sent a joint telegram to the Governor of Montana protesting against the continued slaughter of the elk, which resulted in national publicity through the Associated Press. Though we asked no contributions for the relief of the elk, many were volunteered, and the money was spent for hay by the Superintendent of the Yellowstone National Park.

Bulletin No. 6, issued April 15, calling for immediate help in defeating the irrigation grab in the Yellowstone, met with instant response and support. Scores of our most influential members wrote or wired their Congressmen with the result that, stopped on the Unanimous Consent Calendar, the proponents of the bill have had it referred to the Committee on Rules in the hope of securing it a preferred place on the regular calendar. In fact their only chance is to jam it through this session before public opinion is further aroused.

The Association will oppose this move in the hearing before the House Rules Committee on May 25, together with other Associations and many influential interests summoned for the purpose. If the bill can be thrown over till the next session, it can be killed by public opinion.

Lantern Slide and Library Picture Services. Because of its lack of money little progress was made on these important projects, both of which will move forward steadily with the increase of our means.

Association Book of the Parks. Another valuable project which must await money is an album or portfolio which shall emphasize our special view of national parks' meanings in education and their popular uses; and which can be made to serve the purposes of a year book. Our President originally suggested such a book as an admirable first undertaking.

The Outlook. The Association has a safe cash balance today and practically no debts. It will receive \$3,000 in subscriptions during the next few weeks, and its second year membership dues will come free of expense. A number of subscriptions of \$100 to \$250 made during the last year will be renewed upon request, and some of these may be increased. Many new subscriptions of these denominations are likely to be received during the year. And, before the summer closes in, we may reasonably hope for several new members of our thousand dollar group; the balance of the fifteen will be secured during the fall and winter.

Between April and July of next year five or more members of this group will pay the second year's installment of their three years' subscriptions.

It will be seen that, in all respects, we find ourselves in a much better condition than we were a year ago.

Meantime every new contribution to the cause can be put to work most effectively in carrying out our program of immediate practical work.